

Port of Duluth: Clean and Efficient Goods Movement Workshop Synopsis

This highly successful workshop was the first workshop in the nation to focus on diesel emissions from fresh water shipping. Held in Duluth on February 22, it was co-hosted by US EPA Region 5's Midwest Clean Diesel Initiative and the Duluth Seaway Port Authority.* The workshop brought together participants from diverse sectors that rely on or are affected by diesel engines. Fifty representatives from the following sectors were present: maritime organizations, long and short haul rail companies, trucking companies, retrofit and anti-idling device manufacturers, federal and state environmental agencies, and non-profit organizations. Representatives hailed from several Midwestern states and Ontario. This diversity promoted lively discussions about how best to reduce diesel engine emissions at Great Lakes ports. The conference provided an excellent overview of Great Lakes shipping, a critical component of our nation's economy that faces many environmental challenges (e.g., ballast water issues) in addition to reducing air pollution. The industry also faces security issues, taxes such as the Harbor Maintenance Tax, and ice breaking fees.

Several themes emerged over the course of the day. For example, many speakers noted that partnerships and education are keys to tackling this problem. Two initiatives within the industry, the Great Ships Initiative and the Green Marine Program present opportunities to build partnerships within the Great Lakes shipping community. Furthermore, it was apparent that many approaches to reducing port diesel emissions exist, from taking advantage of retrofit and anti-idling technologies to trading NOx emissions through the Ontario NOx Emissions Trading Program. Adopting anti-idling policies and/or alternative fuels are additional options. With this wide array of options before them, several participants voiced their concern that cost-benefit information about approaches to reducing diesel engine emissions was not more readily available. It was also noted that emissions inventories are important tools in deciding upon a course of action to reduce diesel emissions and that the quality of existing port emission inventories should be improved.

Another key concept that emerged from the workshop was that the case to reduce diesel emissions must be made clear to all stakeholders. Compelling reasons to reduce diesel emissions include reducing exposure of equipment operators and passengers to harmful emissions, improving air quality, and, in the case of Minnesota, avoiding a non-attainment designation. This designation would bring a significant financial burden to the state. For some stakeholders, the compelling reason to reduce emissions is financial - saving money through the use of an anti-idling device. The case to reduce diesel emissions is compelling and participants of this conference gained a greater appreciation for clean and efficient goods movement strategies to help them address this environmental and public health challenge.

*Sponsors of this event included the Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Environmental Initiative, and the US Department of Transportation Maritime Association.